

ARTICLE APPEARED
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NEW YORK TIMES
10 JANUARY 1980

U.S. NOW INDICATING THAT CRISIS IN IRAN COULD LAST MONTHS

AN EFFORT TO PREPARE PUBLIC

Carter and Vance Say at Briefings They See No Imminent Break in the Hostage Situation

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Jan. 9 — The Carter Administration, frustrated by its inability to negotiate the release of the American hostages in Iran, has begun in the last 24 hours to prepare the American public for a crisis that might last for weeks or months more.

With the hostages now in their 67th day of captivity, President Carter and Secretary of State Cyrus R. Vance told 80 members of Congress last night and a group of distinguished Americans this morning that no break was imminent or seemed likely in the Iran situation even though every effort was being made, through a variety of channels, to obtain their release.

A White House aide reported that Mr. Carter said at the breakfast meeting attended by many former Government officials that "he does not see developments that would lead to an early and successful conclusion at this point."

Change Not Held Likely

This gloomy assessment will persist, one State Department official said, regardless of whether the United Nations Security Council approves the American request for economic sanctions against Iran.

Signs were strong today that the Soviet Union, which had gone along with previous Council resolutions against Iran, would veto such a move now, to gain influence in Iran and to offset its loss of prestige elsewhere in the Moslem world following its military intervention in Afghanistan.

A senior State Department official said tonight that if the Russians block passage of a sanctions resolution, the United States expected to act along with its major allies to suspend all exports to Iran except food and medicine, thus carrying the provisions of the resolution anyway.

A month ago, high Administration officials were saying that if the hostages were not released, an American blockade seemed inevitable. Time was running out, officials said in mid-December, and no effort was made to discourage speculation on possible American military moves.

Military Move Held Remote

Several participants in this morning's meeting said, however, they had the impression that the idea of military actions on behalf of the hostages was more remote than ever, though Mr. Carter assured them that the United States was taking steps to augment its military forces in the region.

When asked about this, an official who last month predicted a blockade by mid-January in the absence of a solution, said that signals had changed, in part because of the Soviet moves in Afghanistan.

President Carter, who last night said the Soviet actions in Afghanistan were "the greatest threat to peace since the Second World War," has sought to cultivate Islamic support against the Soviet intervention in a Moslem state.

The Administration now judges that any American military actions against Iran would turn Moslems against the United States and dissipate anti-Soviet sentiment.

Another factor was the analysis of Secretary General Kurt Waldheim of the United Nations and others that the militants holding the United States Embassy were not subject to the control of either Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini or the Revolutionary Council.

Last night Mr. Carter said: "The most powerful single political entity in Iran consists of the international terrorists or the kidnappers who are holding our hostages. Whenever there has been a showdown concerning the hostages between Khomeini or the Revolutionary Council versus the terrorists, the terrorists have always prevailed."

This analysis is not necessarily shared by many in the intelligence community who believe that Ayatollah Khomeini could order the hostages released.

Mr. Carter said that as a result of the radicals' control of the embassy situation, "there is no legitimate political bargaining leverage that can be exerted on them and there is no entity there with whom one can negotiate."

Efforts Are Undercut

Mr. Vance said at the breakfast briefing that every time he had believed some negotiating approach was possible, some faction had undercut the effort.

The President said last night that the presence of "a very strong military force in the Arabian Sea has deterred them so far from taking action that would have been even more abhorrent to the rest of the world."

"It is an ever-present consideration of mine and yours," he said, "and I am determined that this country will not forget for a moment those hostages and the last hostage there is just as important to me as the first one."

Ruling out the possibility of a military rescue of the hostages, Mr. Carter said: "I think most people who have studied the situation and who had looked at the map, who have seen where the embassy is located within Teheran, can see that a strike force or military action that might be oriented toward the release of the hostages would almost certainly end in failure and almost certainly end in the death of the hostages."

"We pray that something will happen and that eventually Iran will recognize that the threat to them is not from the United States but even more vividly from the Soviet Union who have, on Christmas Eve, invaded Afghanistan."